

33rd InSEA World Congress, POLAND

Jagiellonian University, Kraków, 57107

HISTORIC PARKS: A SETTING FOR ARTS AND CULTURAL EDUCATION

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Keywords: historic park, educational setting, arts and cultural education, monuments, cultural space, art of gardening

The educational setting is one of the crucial components of the teaching process. I look at a group of historic parks in the City of Kraków from this point of view. They are easily accessible to the people of the city, and visitors and tourists are familiar with them as well. The best known and outright favourite of these municipal parks with both visitors and locals is the green annulus encircling the historic city centre and known as the Planty Gardens.

Origins of the idea of the park setting as an educational milieu

The inspiration for my idea of historic gardens as potential educational settings came to me when I was writing a monograph on a green area in the City of Kraków known as *Park Jordana* (Jordan's Park). Founded over 120 years ago, Jordan's Park is an outstanding example of an educationally-oriented garden with play areas for children. Its founder was Dr Henryk Jordan, a 19th-century physician and a professor of the Jagiellonian University, philanthropist and talented educator. Dr Jordan's Park is regarded as a prototype children's park not only in Poland but also in other parts of Europe, especially Switzerland, Germany and Austria. In Poland playgrounds known as *ogrody jordanowskie* ("Jordan's gardens") proliferated throughout the country following the original model. Nowadays the best known of Dr Jordan's ideas on education are his recommendations on physical exercise, lessons promoting patriotism (developed at a time when Poland was not an independent country) and outdoor discussions held in the original Park, which is embellished with 44 monuments commemorating Poland's national heroes, artists and poets.¹ Dr Jordan's Park was laid out by Bolesław Małnecki, a well-known gardener and landscape architect, who worked in Kraków in the second part of the 19th century and designed the layout of the Planty Gardens, the City's finest public park picturesquely arranged in an eclectic style combining elements of classical, naturalistic, Secession and Modernist garden composition.



¹ Joanna Torowska, *Park im. dra Henryka Jordana*, Kraków: Ośrodek Kultury im. Cypriana Kamila Norwida, 2006.

I have also had an opportunity to develop some of my ideas on educational issues from American models, particularly some educational and recreational programmes for children, young people and adults managed by federal and local agencies.²

Unfortunately Dr Jordan's ideas on education have not been fully preserved and practised in their original form. In his lifetime his Park was a prime example of a special precinct for children which served both educational and recreation purposes. It adopted a coeducational approach to the youngsters who came here every day for physical exercises, games and competitions. Children spent their free time here in a profitable manner, singing, doing some of the gardening jobs, learning to mend damaged garden tools and playing games. All these activities fostered a sense of duty and responsibility, teamwork and the ability to give up a personal ambition to achieve a collective aim, building up a group identity and thereby promoting patriotism at the grass-roots level at a time when Poland was not an independent country (having been partitioned by three neighbouring "Protecting Powers"). Trained supervisors, mostly students of medicine or education, conducted the teaching duties. They wore special uniforms, which made them easily recognisable among the visitors who came to the Park. Dr Jordan's version of the playground was a brilliant educational idea for the late 19th century; it provided a special dimension of meaning in a country deprived of independence (although at the time the City of Kraków, which was in the Austrian zone of partition, enjoyed a degree of autonomy – just enough leeway to allow for a certain amount of national self-expression).



Today the idea of education in a park setting needs restructuring and revitalisation. It also needs more attention from educationalists. The education of the 21st century is a tremendous challenge for teachers and educationalists. Nowadays young people are subject not only to the influence of their family, peers and school. They are also being targeted by a strong wave of influence from the mass media. We are constantly being inundated by a deluge of changing pictures, copies and mass products. There is no need to explicate the pace of life today – it is a patent fact we are all experiencing every day. The picture of the world has been distorted by innumerable distracting perceptive experiences and observations which do not present real life. Educationalists have noticed the bad effects of the electronic media. They have been observing how more and more often personal relationships between individuals are being damaged, rejected or neglected. The dramatic pace of everyday routine is encroaching into and beginning to dominate the lives of most of us. In this situation, which is new for educative processes, we should be looking for a new environment to bring our personalities to a state of balance, to emphasise all that is constant and enduring in our lives. We should also be striving to



² *National Park Service, Management Policies*, Washington D.C., Washington D.C.: U. S. Department of the Interior, 1988; *Boston Parks and Recreation Annual Report*, 1989; *Boston Parks and Recreation Department, A Common Trust*, Boston, 1989.

accentuate that as human beings we are creators of cultural values. In this way we want to communicate with the world and with other people. These were the reasons why I became interested in historic parks, which are partly the products of nature and partly the products of human ingenuity.

General characteristics of Kraków's Planty Gardens

This is why I decided to examine the historic park setting as exceptionally favourable for people of all ages. Moreover, my particular choice, the Planty Gardens, is a cultural park which features not only a unique natural heritage composed of a patchwork of vintage trees and shrubs, but also a historic manmade fabric with components ranging from the Middle Ages to the present times. This singular combination of natural attractions and historical artefacts



puts the Planty Gardens in a class of their own worldwide. An intrinsic part of Kraków's historic city centre which was one of the original twelve sites registered on the UNESCO World Heritage List (1972), the Planty Gardens carry universal values which deserve to be protected for the benefit of all mankind.

Definitions and keywords: historic park; cultural space; aesthetic, arts and cultural, ecological and history education

I refer to the definition of the historic park. Kraków's Planty Gardens (*Planty Krakowskie*) are a prime example of this type of park. A historic park is a special kind of work of art, with a unique value as an educationally-oriented environment. Historic parks in cities accommodate a variety of material natural and cultural features such as plants, vintage trees, animals, water, historic buildings and monuments, etc. They also have intangible qualities: they offer havens of tranquillity, and a sense of scenic, unrestricted space; they carry a historical heritage; and have their individual *genius loci*. I focus on aesthetic, arts and cultural, ecological and history education, accentuating the role of Tradition and the Past. The cultural park is also a place where one can open up to the Transcendence.



For the term "arts and culture education" I adopt Eurydice's definition. By "visual art" (*) I mean two-dimensional art such as painting and drawing, and three-dimensional art, such as sculpture; (*) by "music" I mean musical performance, composition and music appreciation (in the critical sense); (*) by "drama" I mean dramatic performance, play-writing and drama appreciation; (*) by "dance" I mean dance performance, choreography and dance appreciation; (*) by "media arts" I mean the artistic and expressive elements of the media such as photography, film, video

and computer animation; (*) by “crafts” I mean the artistic and cultural elements of the crafts, such as textile arts, weaving and jewellery making; (*) by “architecture” I mean the art of designing buildings; the observation, planning, and construction of a space.³

In my analysis of the park's space I also use the definition of urban space as a phenomenon subject to research. From the anthropological point of view it is one of the basic “cultural categories.” The term “cultural category” has been



present in anthropology for quite a long time. In the classical sense employed in Aron Gurevich's anthropological work, cultural category describes the basic, universal concepts and forms present in each culture which are required for that culture's existence and which appear in its products. It is through these concepts and forms that people perceive reality and build up their picture of the world. These forms are universal, as they are characteristic for man at each level of his history, although their contents may change. In this approach the space of a city creates a certain reality, it has its own structure and a definite order. Municipal space is organised by humans and subject to historical development, while at the same time it describes the group awareness of a city's inhabitants.⁴

Children, young people and adults: levels to consider

I consider the historic park setting at different levels of education and human development.

The first stage is nursery and preschool education, and of course the child's moral, social and emotional development which can be significantly enhanced in such surroundings. Contact with parents, meetings, walks, chats, etc. are the educative forms I suggest there. Finally I stress the role of contemplation of the natural and cultural landscape in education. In these aspects of the historic park setting the role of parents as the first educators and teachers as their supplementary assistants should be carefully taken into consideration, both in the kindergarten and in the family. One of the social surveys conducted in Kraków after 1990 showed that small children are tired out by activities at school quite quickly, but on the other hand they



³ *Arts and Cultural Education at School in Europe*, Brussels 2009, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA P9 Eurydice), p. 12-13.

⁴ *Kraków przestrzeń kulturowe*, red. Jana Bujaka, Anny Zambrzyckiej-Steczowskiej i Róży Goduli, Kraków 1993, Wydawnictwo PLATAN, s. 7.

like visiting parks and heritage sites with their parents, especially if they do not spend much time with their parents. They love being taken to interesting places by their relatives and families – this is an important point. They simply don't spend enough time with their parents and close relatives.

Advantages of contact with a historic park setting: the aims of arts and cultural education

The results of this survey show that even a small child should spend some time out of doors, at least two or three hours a day. The essential characteristics which should mark the child's contact with parks are frequent walks, the authenticity and directness of the setting, its natural environment, the repeatability of the activities, the accessibility of the park etc. Children can learn in park surroundings by personally discovering and experiencing a variety of features, distinguishing colours and



shapes, making educative observations and improving their perceptive abilities and skills, listening to bird songs, and most importantly identifying the intriguing large shapes and forms they will encounter in the park. In a historic park, which is usually located in the centre of a city, they will also be able to shape social attitudes, enhance their sensitivity and general skills, stimulate activity and self-development, further their comprehensive development, intensify their visual sensitivity, acquire a penchant for observing nature, and finally be introduced to active participation in culture.

These are all aims of art education which can be pursued in the park setting. Art education is the area of learning based on the visual arts in which drawing, painting, sculpture and design play an important role. The latest trends in arts and cultural education also entail photography, video, film and computer arts. The artistic aspects of gardening and picturesque sites are highly relevant to the achievement of these aims.

Significantly, all the main objectives of arts and cultural education are similar in all European countries, and they include learning about and understanding art, its critical reception, getting to know one's cultural heritage, developing one's self-expression, appreciating cultural diversity and creativity. Needless to say, all these objectives can be easily accomplished in a historic park like the Planty Gardens. And it goes without saying that art is an essential component of the learning process. Learning about the visual arts gives students a window onto the rich and fascinating world around them, teaching them about their own history and culture, as well as those of other people. It cultivates self-expression, imagination and creativity, as well as critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Students who learn about art develop their capacities to weigh up meanings and make evaluations and judgements. Understanding and creating art can teach students how to work cooperatively in groups and how to strive to achieve a goal. The development of all of these skills not only makes them better learners but it also helps them build up their self-esteem. And in a world in which ideas and information are often delivered visually, children need to learn how to analyse and judge the meaning of images and how to use them to communicate their own ideas. Art helps children understand other subjects much more clearly and develop their abilities. Art education stimulates and develops children's aesthetic and moral sensitivity and their individual creativity. This is very important, because it insures the child's contact with his/her national cultural heritage and develops his/her general sensitivity.

This kind of contact is authentic. What participants of all ages encounter are real objects which have their own, real history and are meaningful for the community; they have unique artistic, historic and urban values which make them distinctive and remarkable. One of the educational concepts I follow is cultural pedagogy as propounded by the German philosopher and historian Wilhelm Dilthey. Its main hypothesis is that man exists thanks to his understanding of history. Its second assumption is that "cultural goods" such as works

of art, monuments, beautiful landscapes, interesting and fascinating stories, etc. can influence people's personalities. When an individual observes a work of art he makes a special kind of contact with the personality of an artist or a creator and in this way starts to understand the ideas expressed in "cultural goods." So it is important to be in regular contact with "cultural goods," "works of art" etc., as such experiences evoke reflection, which is a key factor in contemporary education.



One of the first steps which should be taken when one wants to conduct a lesson or take a walk in the park is to learn the history of the place.

The first stage in a sightseeing tour for all ages is to introduce people to the history of the place. This creates a specific atmosphere, which is very important in an educational situation. Children, young people and adults alike become more aware of the place where they are. They start to think about this space as something unusual and exceptional and identify the main objects around them. They learn the names of the artists, the objects depicted, and the plants, and they start to feel at home, members of a specific community and a specific culture. They will be proud of their ancestors who created such a beautiful place and they will admire them for it. The experience is always a good incentive. People become more reflexive and sometimes want to visit more places of this kind, read more about them. Ultimately this may lead to the acquisition of what is known as "education through art" and "education by reading and understanding values."

History of the Planty Gardens

The Planty Gardens constitute a ring-shaped stretch of parkland of total area approximately 21 ha and 4 km in length around the oldest part of Kraków. The Gardens were founded in 1821-1830 and given a classical layout. They were extended and redeveloped in the 19th century (mostly after 1870) and 20th century, in a blend of several different architectural styles: English (Natural Landscape), Neo-Romantic, Art Nouveau and Modernist with noticeable Naturalistic landscape trends. The Gardens were laid out on the site of the old municipal fortifications and moats, which were pulled down between 1810 and 1814. In 1820 Count Stanisław Wodzicki submitted a resolution to lay out gardens around the city, on the area of the former fortifications. In 1821-1822 Paweł Flokiewicz and Florian Straszewski drafted a design for the future Planty Gardens. Shortly afterwards the site of the old fortifications was levelled and surfaced. In 1822-1830 the first trees and lawns were planted, paths and drives were demarcated, and a set of low perimeter fences put up around the entire precinct. A special foundation was set up for further development. Significant modifications were made in 1870-1911. Some decorative elements such as a rose garden and exotic plants were added, and some monuments were erected. It took about thirty years to make the Planty Gardens the delightful precinct they are today. In the 1880s the Gardens were embellished with statues which blended into the verdant backdrop. The monuments which went up included a bust of Chopin, and two statues commemorating the great heroes of Polish Romantic literature. The custom of adding new decorative features to this beautiful location has come down to the present times and recently a new fountain commemorating Fryderyk Chopin's piano was erected, after a design by Maria Jaremianka. Nazi occupation during the Second World War (1939-1945) brought serious damage to the Planty Gardens, which were segregated off for use by Germans only.

After the War it turned out that some of the monuments had been damaged and the flowerbeds had deteriorated. It was obvious that the degradation had to be stopped but the first period after the War was not an auspicious time for parks. Trees and vegetation were treated as "biomass" and not much attention was given to them.



In 1972 a new project was launched to restore the Planty, with the designation of a secondary division into eight garden sections designed by

Professor Janusz Bogdanowski and his team (Wanda Genga, Izabella Miczyńska, and Andrzej Patoczka) of the Landscape Architecture Department of Kraków University of Technology. The team compiled a comprehensive dendrological study, a layout for the paths and drives, and a set of landscape studies for the park's visual values.

A continuous restoration programme has been conducted in the Planty Gardens since 1985, with special redesign projects based on expert recommendations for particular sections, by associates of the Landscape Architecture Department of Kraków University of Technology under the supervision of Professor Bogdanowski. A complex long-term renewal has been carried out.

Work intensified in the 1990s thanks to the commitment of the municipal authorities and Zbigniew Beiersdorf, the conservation officer for the City's monuments. Since 1990 a plan to designate the course of the old fortification walls has been implemented, and plaques with the names and views of former towers and gates put up on the original sites (by Stanisław Dousa). A conservation scheme was carried out on the monuments in the 1980s and 1990s, and more recently in 2003-2005. Comprehensive projects involving the renewal of the vegetation, redevelopment of the infrastructure, and new paving and illumination have been conducted in particular sections.

Numerous monuments and plaques commemorating important figures in Polish history and literature are dispersed throughout the Gardens. Some elements of the architecture were founded by private individuals. By the pond near the Basztowa there is a monument of the blind harpist Bojan and his guide. It was founded in honour of the Romantic poet Józef Bohdan Zaleski (died 1886).

Through the vegetation you can spot the brick walls of the Barbakan and St. Florian's Gate, the erstwhile entrance into the City for kings on their royal progresses. Here you can follow the royal route and see the 14th-century defence walls of medieval Kraków. You sense the *genius loci* of this place. But you can also observe the changing construction styles for buildings and walls, you can feel you're on a historic walkabout through the ages. You get a sense history by being in such an interesting place.

In the vicinity there are numerous monuments characteristic for historic parks. In a historic park you will see elderly people, many of whom like to chat with children. The environment of a municipal park keeps children busy. Many historic parks have traditional sandpits, small water pools with fountains and information plaques – the ones in the Planty Gardens tell the story of the erstwhile fortification walls. The surviving stretches of the fortifications and military architecture now have an enhanced aesthetic value; for children this means an even more exciting atmosphere. The views are another important issue: from the Planty Gardens you can see Wawel Hill with the Royal Castle and Cathedral, symbols of Polish statehood and royal necropolis of the kings of Poland. From the part of the Gardens near Wawel Hill you can see the monument of Tadeusz

Kościuszko, who is the hero not only of Poles but also of the United States of America which he fought for in the War of Independence.

I strongly recommend frequent visits to historic parks at both the primary and secondary stage of education. In view of the growing need for ecological, arts and cultural education, I think school outings or trips to the Planty Gardens offer an excellent opportunity for outdoor lessons in biology, literature, history, geography, aesthetics, music and even physical education. The outdoor setting can also be used for lectures on the art of gardening, urban planning, or architecture and design. These are all activities which can strengthen children's social bonds with their local environment, which is so important in present-day education. Accentuating the preservation of the natural and cultural landscape, I opt for a holistic approach to education. All these activities should of course be bolstered by a wide range of publicity campaigns, numerous publications, photographic albums, postcards and many educational and cultural projects for participants of all ages.

Practical Projects conducted in Kraków

So far I have managed to publish a monograph on the history and present day of the Planty Gardens and I have also launched two long-term projects for the pupils and the teachers of schools in the City of Kraków. In addition I would like to say a few words about a project which was conducted in Kraków with a historic park as its basis. It focused on the concept of education on cultural heritage. Its aim was to present some regional and intercultural educational topics to youngsters. The project was addressed both to pupils and teachers at Cracovian schools. The main topic was Kraków's Planty Gardens as a cultural space. The Planty Gardens were also the subject of a competition on the environment organised as part of the ecological syllabus. The first step was to compile a teachers' handbook: almost a hundred years had passed since the first guide was issued. My monograph on the Planty Gardens was the main reference book for teachers.⁵ The project's principal aim was to make pupils and teachers more aware of cultural landscape. Nowadays this green area in the heart of a historic city tends to be used mainly as a readily accessible pedestrian zone and most people are not aware of the fact that they are walking along a historic site.

The impact of foreign influences on Kraków's cultural landscape, especially in architecture, is patent here. Few other places display a mix of cultures as vividly as the Planty Gardens. Poland was a territory where Eastern and Western cultures met and mingled, partly an effect of the country's shifting borders. Kraków is an idiosyncratic example of a city of many cultures.

The experience I acquired during my Parks in Education programme provided the inspiration for this project, which was addressed to teachers and pupils of local schools. My project concentrated on Kraków's historic and contemporary parks and the city's natural and ecological values and assets. I have managed to compile a bibliography on the Planty Gardens. Virtually every person in Poland has heard of the Planty Gardens, the first public gardens in Poland and one of the first in their kind in Europe, easily accessible and always open to visitors.

Secondly, and significantly for an educationalist, the Planty Gardens are a cultural park, and both architecture and the cultural landscape of different epochs play an important role. The Gardens hold an accumulation of different architectural styles extant here over the centuries from the Middle Ages to the present time. The inner belt of the Gardens is lined with a variety of religious buildings such as churches and chapels, whereas the outlying belt of architecture around the Gardens is composed mostly of 19th-century architecture in a range of types, features and styles. This gives the parkland area a unique and specific educational setting, enhancing learning potential.

⁵ Joanna M. Torowska, *Planty Krakowskie. Przewodnik dla nauczycieli*, Wydawnictwo Małopolskie Centrum Doskonalenia Nauczycieli, Kraków 2003.

Nowadays the special cultural setting that the Planty Gardens offer are a challenge for pedagogues, especially in the age of globalisation and multiculturalism. The precinct is an invaluable social space which can be used in education, creating an exceptional educational space, full of symbols, signs, Polish history and culture, and numerous vestiges of other nations and cultures. This precinct harbours an exceptional amount of spiritual value, a legacy from past generations.

The participants of my project collected information on the principal specimens of the city's 19th-century architecture. Of these the most frequently occurring types were public utility buildings, mansions and elegant town houses, and town houses with detailed decorative programmes incorporating patriotic and national symbols. The late 19th-century facilities which we examined included monuments along popular tourist routes. Most of them were erected to commemorate important historical events, for example the statue of Tadeusz Kościuszko, the Grunwald Monument, the Jadwiga and Jagiello Monument commemorating the Polish-Lithuanian Act of Union (1569) etc. We also considered some of the sculptures on the façade of the Palace of Arts, added to mark anniversaries and patriotic events and made by eminent Polish painters and artists like Stanisław Wyspiański or Jan Matejko; monuments associated with and characters from Polish literature (Grażyna and Litawor in the palace gardens on Wawel Hill, Lilla Weneda in the Florianka Garden). Such statues were put up to reinforce the sense of national unity in the times when formally there was no Polish state, but this region of the country did enjoy a certain degree of autonomy under a declining Habsburg monarchy. All these decorative facilities endowed the municipal space with a special Polish and national character and were important for the people and the survival of Polish culture. Nineteenth-century Kraków was called "the spiritual capital of Poland," which it was indeed, and its monuments contributed much to make the epithet a reality.

As I have already said, the Planty space is full of spectacular religious architecture, with numerous churches and chapels, monasteries, crosses and holy statues lining the route and testifying to the Christian culture present here since the 10th century. I have also mentioned the 19th- century facilities situated along the outer belt of the Planty Gardens.

As regards multicultural issues, the role of the architecture in Poland cannot be considered without a wider European context. The pupils and students who come to the Planty Gardens will see the mainly 19th-century architecture along their external perimeter – architecture which has a special, intercultural dimension. Many of the architects who designed these buildings were educated abroad; while others were foreigners who worked in Kraków, importing foreign influences, inspirations, and ideas and applying foreign formal schemes to Polish contents (for example the busts of the kings Poland on the façades of town houses, signs of the Vienna Secession on the Palace of Arts, or the sculptures by Polish artists on its façade). The Gardens are an exceptional public space full of Polish symbols next to symbols of other countries and cultures (for example the statue of the Polish Romantic poet Józef Bohdan Zaleski who wrote on Ukrainian subjects, which stands in the Barbakan section of the Gardens; or the Globe House which was once the headquarters of the Chamber of Commerce and displays symbols of international commerce in its decoration). Viewed in an educational setting, all these signs and symbols from different periods in history convey the message that it is possible for different cultural communities to live next to each other in a spirit of tolerance and mutual understanding, and still preserve their own identity. The accumulation of all these material attributes of cultural integration in a coherent municipal space provides an excellent opportunity for the application of a pedagogy for peace.

I am deeply convinced of the educational benefits for all age groups from this approach to the municipal culture and art of Kraków, especially as regards the aspect of cultural integration. Most importantly, Kraków's cultural and historical legacy as evidenced in its material facilities such as the Planty Gardens is a permanent fixture, easily accessible and making up a unique educational space which carries both a regional and universal value. My project on the Planty Gardens highlights the story of the peaceful co-existence of many cultures in the history and culture of one city, the historic city that Kraków is. The project was coordinated with my monographic book on the Planty Gardens; both the book and the project address the issues of cultural legacy and its transfer from generation to generation, but they also present the specific situation of Kraków and

its environs within the Voivodeship of Lesser Poland. Kraków has a variety of material testimonials to its historical status as a city of many cultures which has also held the glorious title of European City of Culture.

From the educationalist's point of view, my recommendation for teachers is that stressing the role of a place's artistic and cultural landscape, especially its architecture, is a worthwhile strategy in arts and cultural education.

Nature and History offer a repository of educationally beneficial incentives. And we should not forget that in an age of mass products inundating us every day the values monuments and works of art carry are turning into an unsurpassed legacy. This approach to education will underpin the sense of restoration schemes and at the same time reinforce social identity. And finally, since what we educators are endeavouring to do is to prepare the individual to face the future by looking into the past and understanding the present, we should be evoking the spirit of tradition and identity and showing the sense of universal values. As many authors maintain, education should be a process of passing down values. I hope I have shown that Kraków's Planty Gardens offer a perfect setting to embark on large-scale educational campaigns of this kind.

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